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**MERYL MEISLER:
QUEER-FRIENDLY NIGHTLIFE NOW**
**All-New Work Premieres at the Inaugural
CPW Upstate Photography Biennial**

Opening Reception: May 30, 2026, 5pm – 8pm
On View: May 30 – September 6, 2026
Gallery Hours: Thursday to Sunday 11am – 5pm CPW,
25 Dederick Street, Kingston, NY
cpw.org | merylmeisler.com

KINGSTON, NY— Nearly five decades after documenting disco-era revelry, photographer Meryl Meisler returns with a bold new body of work capturing the pulse of contemporary queer nightlife—its grit, glamour, and enduring sense of community. **Meryl Meisler: Queer-Friendly Nightlife Now** premieres the CPW's inaugural Upstate Photography Biennial, a new exhibition series featuring 39 artists from across the region, opening May 30, 2026.

Meisler's fascination with nightlife began in the 1970s, when, as a photography student, she first encountered Brassai's *Secret Paris of the '30s*. After moving to New York in 1975 to study with Lisette Model, she immersed herself in the city's pulsing disco scene, photographing an exuberant, inclusive world from an insider's point of view. For decades, the photographs were tucked away, unseen.

By the early 1980s, Meisler stepped back from the nightlife scene to become a schoolteacher — and when the AIDS epidemic devastated that world, she withdrew entirely. She returned in 2013, after retiring, drawn back by a chance encounter with BIZARRE, a drag and burlesque club in Bushwick, Brooklyn — the neighborhood where she had once taught. The club rekindled the energy and camaraderie that first drew her in, and later exhibited and published her earliest nightlife photographs, bringing them into public view for the first time.

A second turning point came in 2021. While exhibiting in Berlin, Meisler received VIP invitations to nightclubs—but cameras were strictly forbidden. The experience sharpened her awareness of the hard-won trust and access she had built at home: back in New York, performers and producers knew her work and welcomed her lens. She resumed photographing with renewed purpose.

Working today with the same analog camera, flash, and darkroom techniques she used in the 1970s, Meisler captures a new generation of performers—drag artists, burlesque dancers, showgirls, DJs, MCs and nightlife regulars—onstage and off. Her images move fluidly between spectacle and intimacy, revealing the electricity of performance and the candid moments between acts and behind the scenes. Now approaching the age of one of her earliest subjects—Disco Sally, a widow in her late 70s who ruled the floors of Studio 54 and more—Meisler returns with a seasoned perspective, capturing resilient joy and community with deeper intention and clarity, and keeping an earlier curfew.

ABOUT CPW AND THE UPSTATE PHOTOGRAPHY BIENNIAL

CPW's Upstate Photography Biennial is a landmark new exhibition series celebrating the vitality and diversity of photographic practices across upstate New York. Organized by CPW curators Marina Chao and Adam Giles Ryan, the inaugural exhibition features 39 artists. Founded in 1977, CPW is a nonprofit arts organization based in Kingston, NY, dedicated to supporting artists working in photography and related media while engaging audiences through exhibitions, education, and public programs. It serves as an important cultural resource for the Hudson Valley's artistic community and beyond.

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High-resolution images available upon request
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